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[p. 86]

"'WILL YOU TELL ME IF IT'S STRAIGHT?'"

MOTHER GOOSE FOR GROWN-UPS

By GUY WETMORE CARRYL

With Illustrations by PETER NEWELL and GUSTAVE VERBEEK

NEW YORK AND LONDON
HARPER & BROTHERS
1900

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1860
C7m

TO CONSTANCE

In memory of other days,
Dear critic, when your whispered praise
    Cheered on the limping pen.
How short, how sweet those younger hours,
How bright our suns, how few our showers,
    Alas, we knew not then!

If but, long leagues across the seas,
The trivial charm of rhymes like these
    Shall serve to link us twain
An instant in the olden spell
That once we knew and loved so well,
    I have not worked in vain!

469113
UB SETS

NOTE

I HAVE pleasure in acknowledging the courteous per-
ssion of the editors to reprint in this form such of the
lowing verses as were originally published in *Harper's*
gazine, the *Saturday Evening Post*, and the *London Sketch*.

G. W. C.

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THE ADMIRABLE ASSERTIVENESS
OF
JILTED JACK

THE ADMIRABLE ASSERTIVENESS
OF
JILTED JACK

A noble and a generous mind
Was Jack's;
Folks knew he would not talk behind
Their backs:
But when some maiden fresh and young,
At Jack a bit of banter flung,
She soon discovered that his tongue
Was sharp as any ax.

A flirt of most engaging wiles
Was Jill;
On Jack she lavished all her smiles,
Until

Her slave (and he was not the first)
Of lovesick swains became the worst,
His glance a strong box might have burst,
His sighs were fit to kill.

One April morning, clear and fair,
When both
Of staying home and idling there
In sloth
Were weary, Jack remarked to Jill:
"Oh, what's the sense in sitting still?
Let's mount the slope of yonder hill."
And she was nothing loth.

But as she answered: "What's the use?"
The gruff
Young swain replied: "Oh, there's excuse
Enough.
Your doting parents water lack;
We'll fill a pail and bring it back."
(The reader will perceive that Jack
Was putting up a bluff.)

Hand in hand the tempting hill
They scaled,
And Jack proposed a kiss to Jill,
And failed!
One backward start, one step too bold,
And down the hill the couple rolled,
Resembling, if the truth were told,
A luggage train derailed.

With eyes ablaze with anger, she
Exclaimed:
"Well, who'd have thought! You'd ought to be
Ashamed!
You quite forget yourself, it's plain,
So I'll forget you, too. Insane
Young man, I'll say *oafweederzane*."
(Her German might be blamed.)

But Jack, whose linguist's pride was pricked,
To shine,
Asked: "*Meine königin will nicht*
Be mine?"

And when she answered: "Nein" in spleen
He cried: "Then in the soup tureen
You'll stay. You're not the only queen
Discarded for a nein!"

THE MORAL'S made for maidens young
And small:
If you would in a foreign tongue
Enthrall,
Lead off undaunted in a Swede
Or Spanish speech, and you'll succeed,
But they who in a German lead
No favor win at all.

THE BLATANT BRUTALITY
OF
LITTLE BOW PEEP

THE BLATANT BRUTALITY
OF
LITTLE BOW PEEP

Though she was only a shepherdess,
Tending the meekest of sheep,
Never was African leopardess
Crosser than Little Bow Peep:
Quite apathetic, impassible
People described her as: "That
Wayward, contentious, irascible,
Testy, cantankerous brat!"

Yet, as she dozed in a grotto-like
Sort of a kind of a nook,
She was so charmingly Watteau-like,
What with her sheep and her crook;

"She is a dryad or nymph," any
    Casual passer would think.
Poets pronounced her a symphony,
    All in the palest of pink.

Thus it was not enigmatical,
    That the young shepherd who first
Found her asleep, in ecstatical
    Sighs of felicity burst:
Such was his sudden beatitude
    That, as he gazed at her so,
Daphnis gave vent to this platitude:
    "My! Ain't she elegant though!"

Roused from some dream of Arcadia,
    Little Bow Peep with a start
Answered him: "I ain't afraid o' yer!
    P'raps you imagine you're smart!"
Daphnis protested impulsively,
    Blushing as red as a rose;
All was in vain. She convulsively
    Punched the young man in the nose!

All of it's true, every word of it!
I was not present to peep,
But if you ask how I heard of it,
Please to remember the sheep.
There is no need of excuse. You will
See how such scandals occur:
If you recall Mother Goose, you will
Know what tail-bearers they were!

Moral: This pair irreclaimable
Might have made Seraphim weep,
But who can pick the most blamable?
Both saw a little beau peep!

THE COMMENDABLE CASTIGATION
OF
OLD MOTHER HUBBARD

THE COMMENDABLE CASTIGATION
OF
OLD MOTHER HUBBARD

She was one of those creatures
Whose features
Are hard beyond any reclaim;
And she loved in a hovel
To grovel,
And she hadn't a cent to her name.
She owned neither gallants
Nor talents;
She borrowed extensively, too,
From all of her dozens
Of cousins,
And never refunded a *sou:*
Yet all they said in abuse of her
Was: "She is prouder than Lucifer!"
(That, I must say, without meaning to blame,
Is always the way with that kind of a dame!)

There never was jolli-
Er colley
Than Old Mother Hubbard had found,
Though cheaply she bought him,
She'd taught him
To follow her meekly around:
But though she would lick him
And kick him,
It never had any effect;
He always was howling
And growling,
But goodness! What could you expect?
Colleys were never to flourish meant
'Less they had plenty of nourishment,
All that he had were the feathers she'd pluck
Off an occasional chicken or duck.

The colley was barred in
The garden,
He howled and he wailed and he whined.
The neighbors indignant,
Malignant
Petitions unanimous signed.

"The nuisance grows nightly,"
Politely
They wrote. "It's an odious hound,
And either you'll fill him,
Or kill him,
Or else he must go to the pound.
For if this howling infernally
Is to continue nocturnally—
Pardon us, ma'am, if we seem to be curt—
Somebody's apt to get horribly hurt!"

Mother Hubbard cried loudly
And proudly:
"Lands sakes! but you give yourselves airs!
I'll take the law to you
And sue you."
The neighbors responded: "Who cares?
We none of us care if
The sheriff
Lock every man jack of us up;
We won't be repining
At fining
So long as we're rid of the pup!"

They then proceeded to mount a sign,
Bearing this ominous countersign:
"FREEMEN! THE MOMENT HAS COME TO PROTEST
AND OLD MOTHER HUBBARD DELENDUM EST!"

They marched to her gateway,
And straightway
They trampled all over her lawn;
Most rudely they harried
And carried
Her round on a rail until dawn.
They marred her, and jarred her,
And tarred her
And feathered her, just as they should,
Of speech they bereft her,
And left her
With: "*Now* do you think you'll be good!"

THE MORAL'S a charmingly pleasing one.
While we would deprecate teasing one,
Still, when a dame has politeness rebuffed,
She certainly ought to be collared and cuffed.

THE DISCOURAGING DISCOVERY
OF
LITTLE JACK HORNER

THE DISCOURAGING DISCOVERY
OF
LITTLE JACK HORNER

A knack almost incredible for dealing with an edible
Jack Horner's elder sister was acknowledged to display ;
She labored hard and zealously, but always guarded jealously
The secrets of the dishes she invented every day.
She'd take some indigestible, unpopular comestible,
And to its better nature would so tenderly appeal
That Jack invoked a benison upon a haunch of venison,
When ready she was serving him a little leg of veal !

Jack said she was a miracle. The word was not satirical,
For daily climbing upward, she excelled herself at last:
The acme of facility, the zenith of ability
Was what she gave her brother for his Christmas Day repast.
He dined that evening eagerly and anything but meagerly,
And when he'd had his salad and his quart of Extra Dry,
With sisterly benignity, and just a touch of dignity,
She placed upon the table an unutterable pie!

Unflagging pertinacity, and technical sagacity,
Long nights of sleepless vigil, and long days of constant care
Had been involved in making it, improving it, and baking it,
Until of other pies it was the wonder and despair:

So princely and so prominent, so solemn, so predominant
It looked upon the table, that, with fascinated eye,
The youth, with sudden wonder struck, electrified, and thunder struck,
Could only stammer stupidly: "Oh Golly! What a pie!"

In view of his satiety, it almost seemed impiety
To carve this crowning triumph of a culinary life,
But, braced by his avidity, with sudden intrepidity
He broke its dome imposing with a common kitchen knife.
Ah, hideous fatality! for when with eager palate he
Commenced to eat, he happened on an accident uncouth,
And cried with stifled moan: "Of it one plum I tried. The stone of it
Had never been extracted, and I've broke a wisdom tooth!"

Jack's sister wept effusively, but loudly and abusively
His unreserved opinion of her talents he proclaimed;
He called her names like "driveller" and "simpleton" and "sniveller,"
And others, which to mention I am really too ashamed.
THE MORAL: It is saddening, embarrassing, and maddening
A stone to strike in what you thought was paste. One thing alone
Than this mischance is crueller, and that is for a jeweller
To strike but paste in what he fondly thought to be a stone.

THE EMBARRASSING EPISODE
OF
LITTLE MISS MUFFET

THE EMBARRASSING EPISODE
OF
LITTLE MISS MUFFET

Little Miss Muffet discovered a tuffet,
(Which never occurred to the rest of us)
And, as 'twas a June day, and just about noonday,
She wanted to eat—like the best of us:
Her diet was whey, and I hasten to say
It is wholesome and people grow fat on it.
The spot being lonely, the lady not only
Discovered the tuffet, but sat on it.

A rivulet gabbled beside her and babbled,
As rivulets always are thought to do,
And dragon-flies sported around and cavorted,
As poets say dragon-flies ought to do;

When, glancing aside for a moment, she spied
A horrible sight that brought fear to her,
A hideous spider was sitting beside her
And most unavoidably near to her!

Albeit unsightly, this creature politely
Said: "Madam, I earnestly vow to you,
I'm penitent that I did not bring my hat. I
Should otherwise certainly bow to you."
Though anxious to please, he was so ill at ease
That he lost all his sense of propriety,
And grew so inept that he clumsily stept
In her plate—which is barred in Society.

This curious error completed her terror;
She shuddered, and growing much paler, not
Only left tuffet, but dealt him a buffet
Which doubled him up in a sailor-knot.
It should be explained that at this he was pained:
He cried: "I have vexed you, no doubt of it!
Your fist's like a truncheon." "You're still in my
luncheon,"
Was all that she answered. "Get out of it!"

And THE MORAL is this: Be it madam or miss
To whom you have something to say,
You are only absurd when you get in the curd
But you're rude when you get in the whey.

THE FEARFUL FINALE

OF THE

IRASCIBLE MOUSE

THE FEARFUL FINALE
OF THE
IRASCIBLE MOUSE

Upon a stairway built of brick
A pleasant-featured clock
From time to time would murmur "Tick"
And vary it with "Tock":
Although no great intelligence
There lay in either word,
They were not meant to give offence
To anyone who heard.

Within the pantry of the house,
Among some piles of cheese,
There dwelt an irritable mouse,
Extremely hard to please:

His appetite was most immense.
  Each day he ate a wedge
Of Stilton cheese. In consequence
  His nerves were all on edge.

With ill-concealed impatience he,
  Upon his morning walk,
Had heard the clock unceasingly,
  Monotonously talk,
Until his rage burst every bound.
  He gave a fretful shout:
"Well, sakes alive! It's time I found
  What all this talk's about."

With all the admirable skill
  That marks the rodent race
The mouse ran up the clock, until
  He'd crept behind the face,
And then, with words that no one ought
  To use, and scornful squeals,
He cried aloud: "Just what I thought!
  Great oaf, you're full of wheels!"

The timepiece sternly said: "Have done!"
  And through the silent house
It struck emphatically one.
  (But that one was the mouse!)
To earth the prowling rodent fell,
  In terror for his life,
And turned to flee, but, sad to tell,
  There stood the farmer's wife.

She did not faint, she did not quail,
  She did not cry out: "Scat!"
She simply took him by the tail
  And gave him to the cat,
And, with a stern, triumphant look,
  She watched him clawed and cleft,
And with some blotting paper took
  Up all that there was left.

THE MORAL: In a farmer's home
  Run down his herds, his flocks,
Run down his crops, run down his loam,
  But when it comes to clocks,

Pray leave them ticking every one
  In peace upon their shelves:
When running down is to be done
  The clocks run down themselves.

THE GASTRONOMIC GUILE
OF
SIMPLE SIMON

THE GASTRONOMIC GUILE
OF
SIMPLE SIMON

Conveniently near to where
Young Simple Simon dwelt
There was to be a county fair,
And Simple Simon felt
That to the fair he ought to go
In all his Sunday clothes, and so,
Determined to behold the show,
He put them on and went.
(One-half his clothes was borrowed and the other half was lent.)

He heard afar the cheerful sound
Of horns that people blew,
Saw wooden horses swing around
A circle, two and two,

Beheld balloons arise, and if
He scented with a gentle sniff
The smells of pies, what is the dif-
Ference to me or you?
(You cannot say my verse is false, because I know it's true.)

As Simple Simon nearer came
To these attractive smells,
Avoiding every little game
Men played with walnut shells,
He felt a sudden longing rise.
The sparkle in his eager eyes
Betrayed the fact he yearned for pies:
The eye the secret tells.
('Tis known the pie of county fairs all other pies excels.)

So when he saw upon the road,
Some fifty feet away,
A pieman, Simple Simon strode
Toward him, shouting: "Hey!

"NOW SIMON'S TASTES WERE MOST PROFUSE"

What kinds?" as lordly as a prince.
The pieman said: "I've pumpkin, quince,
Blueberry, lemon, peach, and mince:
And, showing his array,
He added: "Won't you try one, sir? They're very
nice to-day."

Now Simon's taste was most profuse,
And so, by way of start,
He ate two cakes, a Charlotte Russe,
Six buns, the better part
Of one big gingerbread, a pair
Of lady-fingers, an eclair,
And ten assorted pies, and there,
His hand upon his heart,
He paused to choose between an apple dumpling
and a tart.

Observing that upon his tray
His goods were growing few,
The pieman cried: "I beg to say
That patrons such as you

One does not meet in many a moon.
Pray, won't you try this macaroon?"
But soon suspicious, changed his tune,
Continuing: "What is due
I beg respectfully to add's a dollar twenty-two."

Then Simple Simon put a curb
Upon his appetite,
And turning with an air superb
He suddenly took flight,
While o'er his shoulder this absurd
And really most offensive word
The trusting pieman shortly heard
To soothe his bitter plight:
"Perhaps I should have said before your wares are
out of sight."

THE MORAL is a simple one,
But still of consequence.
We've seen that Simon's sense of fun
Was almost too intense:

Though blaming his deceitful guise,
We with the pieman sympathize,
The latter we must criticize
Because he was so dense:
He might have known from what he ate that
Simon had no cents.

THE HARMONIOUS HEEDLESSNESS
OF
LITTLE BOY BLUE

THE HARMONIOUS HEEDLESSNESS
OF
LITTLE BOY BLUE

Composing scales beside the rails
That flanked a field of corn,
A farmer's boy with vicious joy
Performed upon a horn:
The vagrant airs, the fragrant airs
Around that field that strayed,
Took flight before the flagrant airs
That noisome urchin played.

He played with care "The Maiden's Prayer;"
He played "God Save the Queen,"
"Die Wacht am Rhein," and "Auld Lang Syne,"
And "Wearing of the Green:"

With futile toots, and brutal toots,
And shrill chromatic scales,
And utterly inutile toots,
And agonizing wails.

The while he played, around him strayed,
And calmly chewed the cud,
Some thirty-nine assorted kine,
All ankle-deep in mud:
They stamped about and tramped about
That mud, till all the troupe
Made noises, as they ramped about,
Like school-boys eating soup.

Till, growing bored, with one accord
They broke the fence forlorn:
The field was doomed. The cows consumed
Two-thirds of all the corn,
And viciously, maliciously,
Went prancing o'er the loam.
That landscape expeditiously
Resembled harvest-home.

"Most idle ass of all your class,"
The farmer said with scorn:
"Just see my son, what you have done!
The cows are in the corn!"
"Oh drat," he said, "the brat!" he said.
The cowherd seemed to rouse.
"My friend, it's worse than that," he said.
"The corn is in the cows."

THE MORAL lies before our eyes.
When tending kine and corn,
Don't spend your noons in tooting tunes
Upon a blatant horn:
Or scaling, and assailing, and
With energy immense,
Your cows will take a railing, and
The farmer take offense.

THE INEXCUSABLE IMPROBITY
OF
TOM, THE PIPER'S SON

THE INEXCUSABLE IMPROBITY
OF
TOM, THE PIPER'S SON

A Paris butcher kept a shop
    Upon the river's bank
Where you could buy a mutton chop
    Or two for half a franc.
The little shop was spruce and neat,
In view of all who trod the street
The decorated joints of meat
    Were hung up in a rank.

This Gallic butcher led a life
    Of highly moral tone;
He never raised his voice in strife,
    He never drank alone:

He simply sat outside his door
And slept from eight o'clock till four;
The more he slept, so much the more
To slumber he was prone.

One day outside his shop he put
A pig he meant to stuff,
And carefully around each foot
He pinned a paper ruff,
But, while a watch he should have kept,
His habit conquered, and he slept,
And for a thief who was adept
That surely was enough.

A Scottish piper dwelt near by,
Whose one ungracious son
Beheld that pig and murmured: "Why,
No sooner said than done!
It seems to me that this I need."
And grasping it, with all his speed
Across the Pont des Invalides
He started on a run.

Then, turning sharply to the right,
Without a thought of risk,
He fled. 'Tis fair to call his flight
Inordinately brisk.
But now the town was all astir,
In vain his feet he strove to spur,
They caught him, shouting: "Au voleur!"
Beside the Obelisk.

The breathless butcher cried: "A mort!"
The crowd said: "Conspuez!"
And some: "A bas!" and half a score
Responded: "Vive l'armée!"
While grim gendarmes with piercing eye,
And stern remarks about: "Canaille!"
The pig abstracted on the sly.
Such is the Gallic way!

The piper's offspring, his defeat
Deep-rooted in his heart,
A revolutionary sheet
Proceeded then to start.

Thenceforward every evening he
In leaders scathed the Ministry,
And wished he could accomplish the
    Return of Bonaparte.

THE MORAL is that when the press
    Begins to rave and shout
It's often difficult to guess
    What it is all about.
The editor we strive to pin,
But we can never find him in.
What startling knowledge we should win
    If we could find him out!

THE JUDICIOUS JUDGMENT
OF
QUITE CONTRARY MARY

THE JUDICIOUS JUDGMENT
OF
QUITE CONTRARY MARY

Though Mary had the kind of face
The rudest wind would softly blow on;
Though she was full of simple grace,
Sweet, amiable, and kind, and so on;
I would not have you understand
That she was meek. You'd be mistaken.
She worked out logarithms, and
Her favorite essayist was Bacon.

And, though not positive, I think
She'd heard about Savonarola,
Had studied Maurice Maeterlinck,
And read the works of Emile Zola,

And Emerson's and some of Kant's,
    And all of mine and Shopenhauer's;
But still she cultivated plants,
    And spent her life in tending flowers.

She had a little hedge of box,
    Azalias, and a bed of tansy,
A double row of hollyhocks,
    And every different kind of pansy:
And, though so innocent of look,
    She'd lovers by the scores and dozens,
And learned, by talking with the cook,
    To tell her friends they were her cousins.

The first was French, the second Greek,
    The third was born upon the Mersey,
The fourth one came from Mozambique,
    The fifth one from the Isle of Jersey.
I cannot tell about the rest,
    But, judging from their dress and faces,
They came from north, east, south, and west,
    But all of them from different places.

Now, such was Mary's sense of pride,
Despite their fervent protestations,
Before she vowed to be a bride
She set them all examinations:
She asked each one to tell the date
Of Washington and Cleopatra,
Name Dickens' novels, and locate
The site of Yonkers and Sumatra.

But so it chanced that, from a score
Of suitors resolute and haughty,
One gained a mark of sixty-four,
And all the rest were under forty.
One swain alone the rest outclassed;
Because of one audacious guess, he
This strict examination passed
When Mary asked the date of Crécy.

THE MORAL shows that when a maid
Her life devotes unto a garden,
When horticultural skill's displayed
Her heart she does not dare to harden.

So crafty suitors, scorn the fates
And you may lay this flattering balm to
Your souls; if you but get your dates
The chances are you'll get the palm, too!

THE LINGUISTIC LANGUOR
OF
CHARLES AUGUSTUS SPRAGUE

THE LINGUISTIC LANGUOR
OF
CHARLES AUGUSTUS SPRAGUE

A child of nature curious
Was Charles Augustus Sprague;
He made his parents furious
Because he was so vague:
Although his age was nearly two
Eleven words were all he knew,
These sounded much as sounds the Dutch
That's spoken at The Hague.

A few of his errata
'Tis just I should avow,
He called his mother "Tata,"
And "moo" he dubbed a cow,

Nor was it altogether plain
Why "choo-choo" meant a railway train.
He called a cat "miouw," and that
No purist would allow.

Within his father's orchard
There stood, for all to see,
With branches bent and tortured,
An ancient apple tree:
That Charles Augustus Sprague might drowse
His mother on its swaying boughs
His cradle hung, and, while it swung,
She sang with energy.

A sudden blow arising
One day, the branches broke,
With suddenness surprising
The sleeping babe awoke,
And crashing down to earth he fell.
Ah me, that I should have to tell
The words that mild and genial child
On this occasion spoke!

His face convulsed and chequered
With passion and with tears,
He blotted out the record
Of both his speechless years:
His mother stupefied, aghast,
Heard Charles Augustus speak at last;
He opened wide his mouth and cried
These ill conditioned sneers.

"Sapristi! Accidente!
Perchance my speech is late,
But, be she two or twenty,
A nincompoop I hate!
What idiot said that woman's 'planned
To warn, to comfort, and command?'"
His words I quench. Excuse my French—
Je dis que tu m'embêtes!

THE MORAL: Common clocks, we find,
In silence take a sudden wind,
But only heroes, as we know,
In silence take a sudden blow.

THE MYSTERIOUS MISAPPREHENSION

CONCERNING

A MAN IN OUR TOWN

THE MYSTERIOUS MISAPPREHENSION
CONCERNING
A MAN IN OUR TOWN

There was a man in our town,
  Half beggar, half rapscallion,
Who, just because his eyes were brown,
  Was thought to be Italian:
And, though with much insistance
  He said that people erred,
And bitterly to Italy
  He frequently referred,
    The false report, as is the way
    Of false reports, had come to stay!

So every one who'd been to Rome
  By aid of Cook's or Gaze's,
Would call upon him at his home
  To flaunt Italian phrases.

"Capite Questa lingua?"
The inquiry would be:
"Pochissimo? Benissimo!
Vi prego, ditemi,
Siete voi contento qua,
Lontano dall' Italia?"

The victim, plunged in deep disgust,
Grew nervous, could not slumber;
Said he, "I'm called Italian, just
Because my eyes are umber,
And if this persecution
Is ever to be stopped,
Some stern and stoic, hard, heroic
Course I must adopt!"
And so, to everyone's surprise,
He calmly scratched out both his eyes!

The neighbors said: "So strange a thing
Might seem to be an omen.
We *thought* his wits were wandering,
But now we *know* they're Roman!"

And so at him by legions,
  By bevies, hosts, and herds,
Professors, purists, tramps, and tourists
  Screamed Italian words.
    Perceiving all he'd done was vain,
    He scratched his eyesight in again.

THE MORAL: If your neighbors say
  You're one thing or another,
You'll find there isn't any way
  Their prejudice to smother.
What matter if they think you
  From Italy or Greece?
I beg you, treasure no displeasure:
  Bow and hold your peace.
    Like Omar, underneath the bow
    You'll find there's paradise enow!

THE OPPORTUNE OVERTHROW
OF
HUMPTY DUMPTY

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OF
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Upon a wall of medium height
Bombastically sat
A boastful boy, and he was quite
Unreasonably fat:
And what aroused a most intense
Disgust in passers-by
Was his abnormal impudence
In hailing them with "Hi!"
While by his kicks he loosened bricks
The girls to terrify.

When thus for half an hour or more
He'd played his idle tricks,
And wounded something like a score
Of people with the bricks,

A man who kept a fuel shop
Across from where he sat
Remarked: "Well, this has got to stop."
Then, snatching up his hat,
And sallying out, began to shout:
"Look here! Come down from that!"

The boastful boy to laugh began,
As laughs a vapid clown,
And cried: "It takes a bigger man
Than you to call me down!
This wall is smooth, this wall is high,
And safe from every one.
No acrobat could do what I
Had been and gone and done!"
Though this reviled, the other smiled,
And said: "Just wait, my son!"

Then to the interested throng
That watched across the way
He showed with smiling face a long
And slender Henry Clay,

"WHILE BY KICKS HE LOOSENED BRICKS"

Remarking: "In upon my shelves
All kinds of coal there are.
Step in, my friends, and help yourselves.
And he who first can jar
That wretched urchin off his perch
Will get this good cigar."

The throng this task did not disdain,
But threw with heart and soul,
Till round the youth there raged a rain
Of lumps of cannel-coal.
He dodged for all that he was worth,
Till one bombarder deft
Triumphant brought him down to earth,
Of vanity bereft.
"I see," said he, "that this is the
Coal day when I get left."

THE MORAL is that fuel can
Become the tool of fate
When thrown upon a little man,
Instead of on a grate.

This story proves that when a brat
    Imagines he's admired,
And acts in such a fashion that
    He makes his neighbors tired,
That little fool, who's much too cool;
    Gets warmed when coal is fired.

THE PREPOSTEROUS PERFORMANCE
OF
AN OLD LADY OF BANBURY

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OF
AN OLD LADY OF BANBURY

Within a little attic a retiring, but erratic
  Old lady (six-and-eighty, to be frank),
Made sauces out of cranberry for all the town
      of Banbury,
  Depositing the proceeds in the bank.
Her tendency to thriftiness, her scorn of any
      shiftiness
  Built a bustling business, and in course
Of time her secret yearnings were revealed,
      and all her earnings
  She squandered in the purchase of a horse.

"I am not in a hurry for a waggonette or surrey,"
She said. "In fact, I much prefer to ride."
And spite of all premonishment, to everyone's astonishment,
The gay old lady did so—and astride!
Now this was most periculous, but, what was more ridiculous,
The horse she bought had pulled a car, and so,
The lazy steed to cheer up, she'd a bell upon her stirrup,
And rang it twice to make the creature go!

I blush the truth to utter, but it seems a pound of butter
And thirty eggs she had to sell. Of course,
In scorn of ways pedestrian, this fatuous equestrian
To market gaily started on the horse.
Becoming too importunate to hasten, the unfortunate
Old lady plied her charger with a birch.

In view of all her cronies, this stupidest of ponies
Fell flat before the Presbyterian church!

If it should chance that one set a red Italian sunset
Beside a Beardsley poster, and a plaid
Like any canny Highlander's beside a Fiji Islander's
Most variegated costume, and should add
A Turner composition, and with clever intuition,
To cap the climax, pile upon them all
The aurora borealis, then veracity, not malice,
Might claim a close resemblance to her fall.

At sight of her disaster, with arnica and plaster
The neighbors ran up eagerly to aid.
They cried: "Don't do that offen, ma'am, or you will need a coffin, ma'am,
You've hurt your solar plexus, we're afraid.
We hope your martyrdom'll let you notice what an omelette
You've made in half a jiffy. It is great!"

She only clutched her bonnet (she had fallen
flat upon it),
And answered: "Will you tell me if it's
straight?"

THE MORAL'S rather curious: for often the
penurious
Are apt to think old horses of account
If you would ride, then seek fine examples of
the equine,
And don't look on a molehill as a mount.

THE QUIXOTIC QUEST
OF
THREE BLIND MICE

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OF
THREE BLIND MICE

A maiden mouse of an arrogant mind
Had three little swains and all were blind.
The reason for this I do not know,
But I think it was love that made them so,
For without demur they bowed to her,
Though she treated them all with a high hauteur.
She ruled them, schooled them, frequently fooled
them,
Snubbed, tormented, and ridiculed them:
Mice as a rule are much like men,
So they swallowed their pride and called again.

The maiden mouse of an arrogant mind
To morbid romance was much inclined.
The reason for this I have not learned,
But I think by novels her head was turned.
She said that the chap who dared to nap
One hour inside of the farmer's trap
Might gain her, reign her, wholly enchain her,
Woo her, win her, and thence retain her!
Hope ran high in each suitor's breast,
And all determined to stand the test.

The maiden mouse of an arrogant mind
Laughed when she saw them thus confined.
The reason for this I can't proclaim,
But I know some girls who'd have done the same!
As thus they kept to their word, and slept,
The farmer's wife to the pantry stept:
She sought them, caught them, carefully brought
them
Out to the light, and there she taught them
How that chivalry often fails,
By calmly cutting off all their tails!

The maiden mouse of an arrogant mind
Treated her swains in a way unkind.
The reason for this is not complex:
That's always the way with the tender sex.
With impudent hails she cried: "What ails
You all, and where are your splendid tails?"
She jeered so, sneered so, flouted and fleered so,
Giggled, and altogether appeared so
Lacking in heart, that her slaves grew bored,
And threw up the sponge of their own accord.

The maiden mouse of an arrogant mind
Watched and waited, and peaked and pined.
The reason for this, I beg to state,
Is all summed up in the words Too Late!
The moral intwined is: Love is blind,
But he never leaves all his wits behind:
You may beat him, cheat him, often defeat him,
Though he be true with torture treat him:
One of these days you'll be bereft,
You think you're right, but you'll find you're left.

THE REMARKABLE REGIMEN
OF
THE SPRAT FAMILY

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OF
THE SPRAT FAMILY

The Sprats were four in number,
    Including twins in kilts:
All day Jack carted lumber,
    All day his wife made quilts.
Thus heartlessly neglected
    Twelve hours in twenty-four,
As might have been expected,
    The twins sat on the floor:
And all the buttons, I should state,
They chanced to find, they promptly ate.
    This was not meat, but still it's true
    We did the same when we were two.

The wife (whose name was Julia)
Maintained an ample board,
But one thing was peculiar,
Lean meat she quite abhorred.
Here also should be stated
Another fact: 'tis that
Her spouse abominated
The very taste of fat.
This contrast curious of taste
Precluded any thought of waste,
For all they left of any meal
No self-respecting dog would steal.

No generous *table d'hôte* meal,
No dainties packed in tins,
But only bowls of oatmeal
They gave the wretched twins;
And yet like princes pampered
Had lived those babes accursed,
Could they have fed unhampered:—
I have not told the worst!

Since nothing from the dining-room
Was left to feed the cook and groom,
    It seems that these domestics cruel
    Were led to steal the children's gruel!

The twins, all hopes resigning,
    And wounded to the core,
Confined themselves to dining
    On buttons off the floor.
No passionate resentment
    The docile babes displayed:
Each day in calm contentment
    Three hearty meals they made.
And daily Jack and Mrs. Sprat
Ate all the lean and all the fat,
    And every day the groom and cook
    The children's meal contrived to hook.

But when the twins grew older,
    As twins are apt to do,
And, shoulder touching shoulder,
    Sat Sundays in their pew.

They saw no Christian glory
    In parting with a dime,
And in the offertory
    Dropped buttons every time.
Said they: "What's good enough for Sprats
Is good enough for heathen brats."
    (I most sincerely wish I knew
    What was the heathen's point of view.)

THE MORAL: Anecdotes abound
Of buttons in collections found.
Thus on the wheels of progress go,
And heathens reap what Christians sew!

THE SINGULAR SANGFROID
OF
BABY BUNTING

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OF
BABY BUNTING

Bartholomew Benjamin Bunting
Had only three passions in life,
And one of the trio was hunting,
The others his babe and his wife:
And always, so rigid his habits,
He frolicked at home until two,
And then started hunting for rabbits,
And hunted till fall of the dew.

Belinda Bellonia Bunting,
Thus widowed for half of the day,
Her duty maternal confronting,
With baby would patiently play.

When thus was her energy wasted
A patented food she'd dispense.
(She had bought it the day that they pasted
The posters all over her fence.)

But Bonaparte Buckingham Bunting,
The infant thus blindly adored,
Replied to her worship by grunting,
Which showed he was brutally bored.
'Twas little he cared for the troubles
Of life. Like a crab on the sands,
From his sweet little mouth he blew bubbles,
And threatened the air with his hands.

Bartholomew Benjamin Bunting
One night, as his wife let him in,
Produced as the fruit of his hunting
A cottontail's velvety skin,
Which, seeing young Bonaparte wriggle,
He gave him without a demur,
And the babe with an aqueous giggle
He swallowed the whole of the fur!

Belinda Bellonia Bunting
Behaved like a consummate loon:
Her offspring in frenzy confronting
She screamed herself mottled maroon:
She felt of his vertebræ spinal,
Expecting he'd surely succumb,
And gave him one vigorous, final,
Hard prod in the pit of his tum.

But Bonaparte Buckingham Bunting,
At first but a trifle perplexed,
By a change in his manner of grunting
Soon showed he was terribly vexed.
He displayed not a sign of repentance
But spoke, in a dignified tone,
The only consecutive sentence
He uttered. 'Twas: "Lemme alone."

THE MORAL: The parent that uses
Precaution his folly regrets:
An infant gets all that he chooses,
An infant chews all that he gets.

And colics? He constantly has 'em
So long as his food is the best,
But he'll swallow with never a spasm
What ostriches couldn't digest!

THE TOUCHING TENDERNESS
OF
KING KARL THE FIRST

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OF
KING KARL THE FIRST

For hunger and thirst King Karl the First
Had a stoical, stern disdain:
The food that he ordered consistently bordered
On what is described as plain.
Much trouble his cook ambitiously took
To tickle his frugal taste,
But all of his savoury science and slavery
Ended in naught but waste.

Said the steward: "The thing to tempt the King
And charm his indifferent eye
No doubt is a tasty, delectable pasty.
Make him a blackbird pie!"

The cook at these words baked twenty-four birds,
And set them before the King,
And the two dozen odious, bold, and melodious
Singers began to sing.

The King in surprise said: "Dozens of pies
In the course of our life we've tried,
But never before us was served up a chorus
Like this that we hear inside!"
With a thunderous look he ordered the cook
And the steward before him brought,
And with a beatified smile: "He is satisfied!"
Both of these innocents thought.

"Of sinners the worst," said Karl the First,
"Is the barbarous ruffian that
A song-bird would slaughter, unless for his daughter
Or wife he is trimming a hat.
We'll punish you so for the future you'll know
That from mercy you can't depart.
Observe that your lenient, kind, intervenient
King has a tender heart!"

He saw that the cook in a neighboring brook
    Was drowned (as he quite deserved),
And he ordered the steward at once to be skewered.
    (The steward was much unnerved.)
"It's a curious thing," said the merciful King,
    "That monarchs so tender are,
So oft we're affected that we have suspected that
    We are too kind by far."

THE MORAL: The mercy of men and of Kings
Are apt to be wholly dissimilar things.
In spite of "The Merchant of Venice," we're pained
To note that the quality's sometimes strained.

THE UNUSUAL UBIQUITY
OF
THE INQUISITIVE GANDER

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A gander dwelt upon a farm
And no one could resist him,
For had he died, such was his charm,
His neighbors would have missed him:
His scorn for any loud display,
His cheerful hissing day by day,
Would win your heart in such a way
You almost could have kissed him.

This bird was always nosing 'round.
Most patiently he waited
Until an open door he found,
And then investigated.

He loved to poke, he loved to peek,
In every knothole, so to speak,
He quickly thrust his prying beak,
For what was hid he hated.

The farm exhausted: "Now," said he:
"My policy's expansion.
When one's convinced how things should be
The proper course he can't shun.
His mind made up, he followed it,
Relying on his native wit,
And soon had wandered, bit by bit,
Through all his master's mansion.

"At least," he said: "It's not my fault
If everything's not seen to:
I've gone from garret down to vault,
And glanced into the lean-to.
In every room I've chanced to stop;
A supervising glance to drop,
I've looked below, I've looked on top,
Behind, and in between, too!"

One thing alone he found to blame,
As thus his time he squandered,
For, seeing not the farmer's dame,
Into her room he wandered,
And mounting nimbly on the bed:
"Why, bless my careful soul!" he said:
"These pillows are as hard as lead.
Now, how comes that?" he pondered.

The farmer's dame for half an hour
Had watched the bird meander,
And finding him within her power,
She leaped upon the gander.
"Why, how de do, my gander coy?"
She shouted: "What will be my joy
To dream to-night on you, my boy!"
(This was no baseless slander.)

For with a stoutish piece of string
Securely was this fool tied,
And by a leg and by a wing
Unto an oaken stool tied:

While, pinning towels around her gown,
She plucked him with relentless frown,
And stuffed the pillows with his down,
And roasted him for Yuletide.

THE MORAL is: When you explore
Don't try to be superior:
Be cautious, and retire before
Your safety grows inferior.
'Tis best to stay upon the coast,
Or some day you will be like most
Of all that bold exploring host
That's gone to the interior.

THE END

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